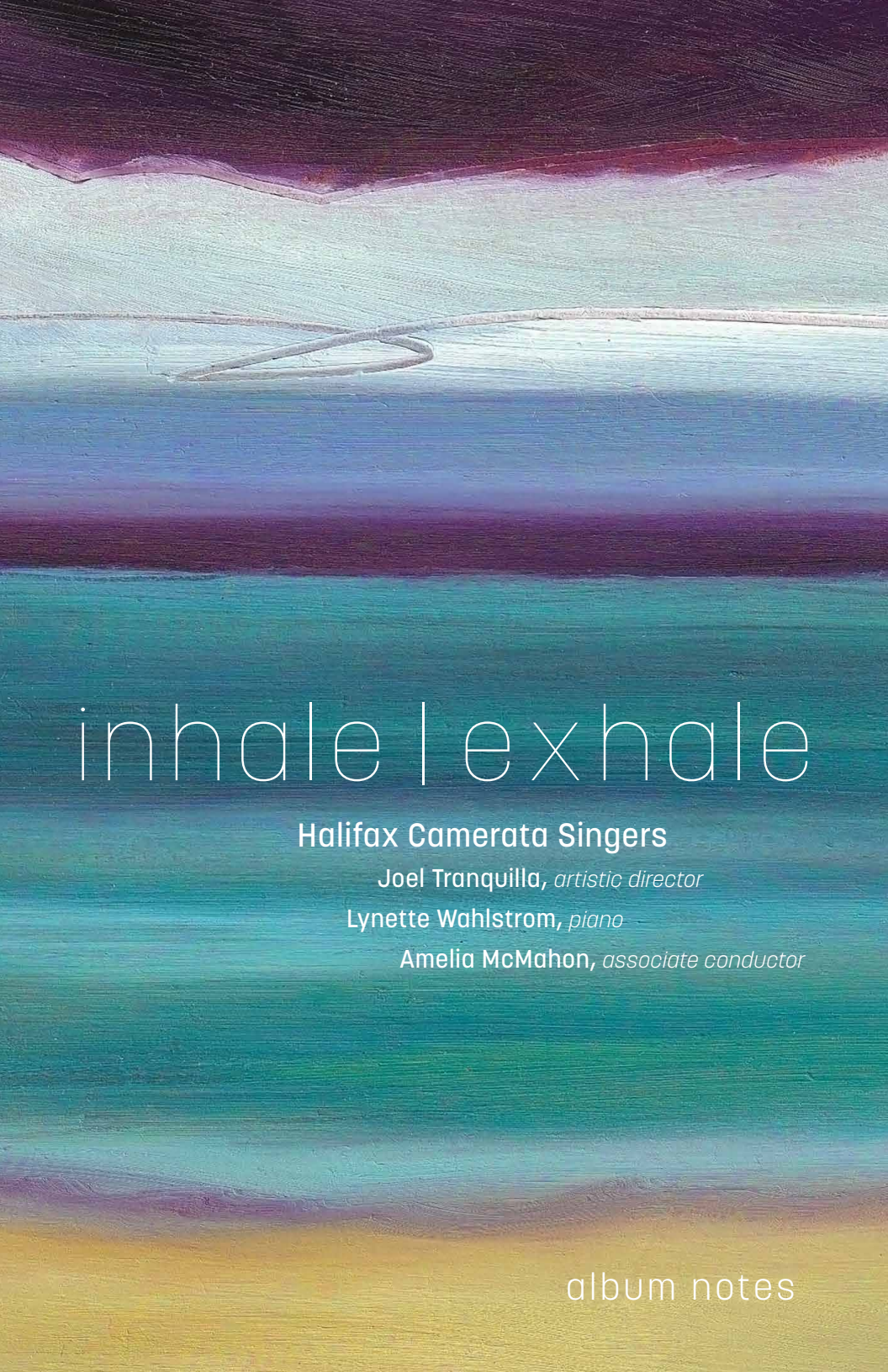




inhale | exhale

Halifax Camerata Singers

Joel Tranquilla, *artistic director*

Lynette Wahlstrom, *piano*

Amelia McMahon, *associate conductor*

album notes



inhale | exhale

The Halifax Camerata Singers has been a leader in Atlantic Canada's vibrant arts community since 1986. Made up of some of the region's finest choral singers, Camerata performs exciting repertoire in a wide range of styles. The ensemble is especially dedicated to exploring contemporary Canadian music and is proud to present this album comprising entirely Canadian composers and arrangers. Camerata prioritizes connecting with local artists and organizations who – like us – are oriented towards community building and innovative cross-disciplinary collaboration. This album is a celebration of some of those partnerships: with movement artist Meredith Kalaman, whose inspiring artistry has been hugely influential (especially on “Butterfly Blue”); with the Halifax-Dartmouth branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, whose important work in our community has helped to guide our storytelling these past two years (particularly the *Three Songs of Love and Loneliness*); with our instrumental collaborators Ellen Gibling (“Secret Heart”), Luke Fraser, and Scott Kingsley (“Opening Day”), whose versatility helped us to move beyond a more strictly classical orientation; with producer Jeff Reilly and recording engineer Rod Sneddon, whose willingness to understand our sound and our journey allowed us to push ourselves even further than expected; and with the composers and arrangers, especially those whose music we've been privileged to commission and/or premiere (including “La fille matelot,” “Love,” “lonely cloud,” and *Whispers of Mermaids*). This album also tells the story of new beginnings, as the baton was passed from Camerata's founder, Artistic Director Emeritus Jeff Joudrey to newly appointed Artistic Director Joel Tranquilla in 2023. The singers, pianist, and conductors have been learning how to be in sync with one another (literally inhaling and exhaling together), with open ears, open minds, and open hearts.

artistic team

Joel Tranquilla, *artistic director*

Joel Tranquilla (he/him) is a conductor, curator, and music educator noted for his versatile musicianship and creative programming. As the Artistic Director of the Halifax Camerata Singers, Chorus Master of Symphony Nova Scotia, and Director of Music at Grace United Church in Dartmouth, he oversees a busy schedule of local choral performances, educational outreach, and community engagement. He is proud to have served in past leadership roles with the Canadian Chamber Choir, Trinity Western University Choirs, the Valley Festival Singers of Abbotsford, the Coastal Sound Youth Choir, the Windsor Classic Chorale, and the Windsor Symphony Orchestra. Joel has performed,

adjudicated, and guest conducted from coast to coast, connecting with singers, composers, and fellow conductors along the way. He holds degrees from Mount Allison University, the University of Michigan, and Michigan State University where his doctoral research was in the area of Canadian choral-orchestral works.

Lynette Wahlstrom, *collaborative pianist*

Lynette Wahlstrom (she/her/hers) is Pianist for the Halifax Camerata Singers, Symphony Nova Scotia Chorus, and Director of Music at First Baptist Church, Halifax. Lynette is a fervent supporter of the Fountain School of Performing Arts, Dalhousie University, having played for 14 years as Collaborative Pianist for the Voice Department. She is very proud to contribute to her community, having performed with Opera Nova Scotia, Halifax Summer Opera Festival, Opera from Scratch, and Nova Scotia Choral Federation, and has actively served on the boards of Opera Nova Scotia, RCCO Halifax Chapter, and Early Music Society of Nova Scotia.

*Photo credit: artistic team
by Emily Jewer*



Amelia McMahon,
associate conductor

Amelia McMahon (she/her/elle) grew up in the Annapolis Valley and spent 21 years studying and working in Montreal before returning to Nova Scotia. While in Montreal, she was the Co-Artistic Director of the award-winning Chœur Adleisia, Artistic Director of La Chorale Harmonia, and Music Director of the 11 O'Clock Choir at St. Veronica's Catholic Parish. Amelia now serves as Associate Conductor of Camerata,

Artistic Director of the South Shore Chorale, Co-Principal Conductor of the Borealis Chamber Choir, Resident Conductor of the Nova Scotia Youth Choir, and member of the voice faculty at the Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts. Mentored throughout her career by Iwan Edwards, Amelia studied choral conducting at L'Université de Sherbrooke and holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Jazz Voice from McGill University where she studied privately with Ranee Lee.

guest artists

Luke Fraser, *mandolin*

Luke Fraser (he/him) is known for his versatility as a performer and his open, creative spirit. Luke has established himself within folk and classical communities across Canada. He has recorded with Sarah Jane Scouten, Mike T. Kerr and Ben Sures, and Terra Spencer and Shari Ulrich. Luke holds degrees in Guitar Performance from Dalhousie (BMus) and McGill (MMus). His bluegrass/songwriter duo, The Bombadils has won multiple awards, including Vocal Group of the Year (Canadian Folk Music Awards) and Rising Star (East Coast Music Awards), and his work as side musician and

band leader has taken him across Canada, the USA, Europe, and Australia.



Ellen Gibling, *harp*

Ellen Gibling (she/her) is a harpist whose playing spans classical, Irish traditional, and free improvised music. She is a member of large ensembles Many Worlds and Scions, as well as performing frequently with The Bombadils, Charlie Wilson, Adrianna Ciccone, and Jack Chen. Ellen has composed

*Photo credit: guest artists
by Kate Spencer*

for dance and theatre and premiered a harp concerto by Jeff Reilly with Symphony Nova Scotia in 2024. Ellen's solo album *The Bend in the Light* (2022) was reviewed as "bold and beautiful" (Celtic Life International) and "enchanting" (Folk London).

Scott Kingsley, double bass

Originally from the West Coast, Scott Kingsley (he/him) studied music at Vancouver Island University before obtaining his Masters

in Jazz Performance at McGill University. Over the years Scott has had a pattern of being drawn to musical projects of inspiration, creativity and sometimes absurdity. He was a member of the I Medici di McGill orchestra, performed with avant-garde jazz metal group Kids Eat Crayons, and has been recording and touring with bluegrass/songwriter duo The Bombadils since 2021. Currently, Scott lives in Halifax with his family where he continues to perform, play, and explore.

singers

SOPRANO

Molly Anderson
Tamara Freeman
Morgandy Levy
Toinette Martin
Meaghan McKay
Juliette Moncada
Janna Sherlock
Kate Spencer
Lisa Webb

ALTO

Julia Blundon
Mackenzie Costron-Li
Kelly Hart
Maiti McGrath
Amelia McMahon
Alexandra Meinzinger
Jessica Sharp
Tessa Short

TENOR

William Austin
Cameron Bennett
David Caldwell
Geoff Gillespie
Simon Hardman
Frederick Li

BASS

Graham Bolton
Bryan Crocker
Steven DeWitt
Ian Easter
Spencer Gough
Byron Hermann
Vincent Kong
Bertrum MacDonald
Sean Pecknold
Kurt Sampson



*Photo credit: choir
by Emily Jewer*

notes & texts

Come Back Like the Sea

Katerina Gimon (Vancouver, BC, b. 1993), Text: Sara Teasdale

“For me, the poem at its heart is really about impermanence. Whatever emotion or thing we’re struggling with – whether we’re having a difficult day or a difficult year – life is cyclical, and we can learn so much from nature. And in this case, Sara Teasdale relates that feeling and that emotion – these times in our lives – to the rise and fall of the ebb-tide.” (*Gimon, from an interview with Joel*)

When the long day goes by
And I do not see your face,
The old wild, restless sorrow
Steals from its hiding place.
My day is barren and broken,
Bereft of light and song,
A beach bleak and windy
That moans the whole day long.

To the empty beach at ebb tide,
Bare with its rocks and scars,
Come back like the sea
with singing,
And the light of a million stars.

Opening Day (56 Year Old Wig)

Murray D. Evans (Winnipeg, MB, b. 1960), Text: Murray D. Evans
arr. Joel Tranquilla (Halifax, NS, b. 1985)

Julia Blundon, *soloist*; Luke Fraser, *mandolin*
Scott Kingsley, *double bass*; Amelia McMahon, *shaker*

Arrangement premiered by the Halifax Camerata Singers

“Opening Day” was written for the Winnipeg folk band, The Dust Poets by bandmember Murray Evans. He explains: “The back story to the song is that while cleaning out an estate, a friend found braids of her mother’s hair in a box. The braids were given to another relative and made into wigs for a theatrical performance. The song is written from the perspective of the braids being worn for one last performance.” Camerata is thrilled to share this story with a new audience.

piles of papers and trunks of clothes
unopened mail and maps for roads
there was a box with braids so fair
spent 56 years sitting there
we had some wigs made from your hair

the sound of music never looked this good
red haired curls of a riding hood
your spirit moves through time and space
i can see the look on your face
hills are alive all with your grace

i can picture you flying above the stage
there's no need for wires to keep you up there in your place
the heavens above are opening up into outer space
you'll steal the scene around here on opening day

you'll get to play in every heart
they shaved a head for every part
you'll be on stage through curtains end
there'll be seats for all your friends
standing o's and applause from them

i can picture you flying above the stage
there's no need for wires to keep you up there in your place
the heavens above are opening up into outer space
you'll steal the scene around here on opening day

on opening day your star will shine and you'll be heard
there's nothing better than seeing a critic
who's choking on a mouthful of his words

i can't imagine a more fitting end
to see your red-haired curls again
they were cut and they were saved
who'd ever guess they'd be used this way
pieces of you on opening day

i can picture you flying above the stage
there's no need for wires to keep you up there in your place
the heavens above are opening up into outer space
you'll steal the scene around here
on opening day

The Arrow and the Song

Laura Hawley (Edmonton, AB, b. 1982)

Text: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Alexandra Meinzinger, *soloist*

I shot an arrow into the air,
it fell to earth, I knew not where;
for so swiftly it flew, the sight
could not follow its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
it fell to earth, I knew not where;
for who has sight so keen and strong
that it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
and the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.

La fille matelot

Marie-Claire Saindon (Montreal, QC, b. 1984)

Text: Traditional, adapted by the composer

English translation by Marie-Claire Saindon

Commissioned by the Halifax Camerata Singers

“My mother was an Acadian singer-songwriter, so of course she would collect poetry books. This story is not Acadian, but comes from a book of songs collected by Marius Barbeau who would travel around Quebec. It has an epic feel, and I’ve punctuated the different verses with interludes in the style of a mouth reel, which is a Celtic tradition that has a parallel in Acadian music. Basically, you take an instrumental jig or reel that you would ordinarily hear a fiddler play. Different syllables are used to create the feeling of different rhythms and accents.” (*Saindon, from an interview with Joel*)

Chantons, chantons, pour y passer
le temps,

Chantons, chantons, un amour
plaisant!

Une fille s’habille en matelot
S’y présente au bord du vaisseau.

Chantons, chantons, pour y passer
le temps.

« Adieu, adieu, lui dit son amant !

Adieu, je vais partir

Pour m’en alooler en guerre. »

Chantons, chantons, pour y passer
le temps.

Chantons un amour plaisant !

« Adieu, ma charmante Isabeau,

Adieu, ma bien-aimée !

Adieu, je vais partir

Pour m’en aller en guerre, en guerre,

Pour m’en aller aux combats ! »

Sing, sing to pass the time

Sing, sing, a pleasant love!

A lass dresses up as a sailor

And boards the ship,

Sing, sing to pass the time!

“Farewell, farewell,” said her lover,

“Farewell, I’m leaving

To go to war.”

Sing, sing to pass the time

Sing, sing, a pleasant love!

Farewell, my lovely Isabeau!

Farewell, my beloved!

Farewell, I’m leaving

To go to war,

To go to battle!”

Mais quand la belle voit
Son amant partir
Mais quand la belle voit
Son amant partir en guerre
Elle laisse tous ses habits de fille
Ses robes and ses jupons:
Elle s'habille en jeune matelot
Pour monter à bord du vaisseau,
Pour s'en aller aux combats !

Le capitaine la revoit
Plus de mille fois,
Sur son vaisseau, la revoit,
Sans la reconnaître.
Sur son vaisseau, la revoit,
Plus de mille fois.

Lui a dit : « Charmant matelot,
Ah ! que vous ressemblez
À ma douce amie,
À mon Isabeau.

« Votre blanc visage
Aussi vos yeux doux,
Votre joli corsage
Ainsi que vos gracieuses mains
Votre charmante voix
M'ont toujours rappelé
Que vous ressembliez
À mon Isabeau,
À ma bien-aimée. »

« Monsieur, quand vous me dites ça
Vous m'y surprenez :
Monsieur, quand vous me dites ça
Vous m'y faites rire !
Je suis de Shippagan
Et suis éloignée,
De mes parents. »

*But when the lass saw
Her lover leave,
But when the lass saw
Her lover leave to war,
She abandoned her women's clothes,
Her skirts and petticoats.
She dressed herself as a young sailor,
To board the ship,
To go to battle!*

*The captain saw her
Over a thousand times,
Saw her on his ship
Without recognizing her.
Saw her on his ship,
Over a thousand times.*

*He told her: "Lovely sailor,
Ah! how you resemble
My sweet lover,
My Isabeau.*

*"Your porcelain face,
Your soft eyes,
Your lovely shape,
Your graceful hands,
And your charming voice
Have always reminded me
How much you resemble
My Isabeau,
My beloved."*

*"Sir, when you say that,
You surprise me!
Sir, when you say that,
You make me laugh!
I'm from Shippagan.
I'm, oh, so far
From all my family."*

La belle a bien été sept ans
 Dedans ce bâtiment,
 Sans se faire reconnaître.
 La belle et bien été sept ans
 En tant que matelot,
 Sous le regard de son amant
 Sans se faire reconnaître,
 Rien qu'au débarquement.
 Puisque c'est ici
 Que l'amour nous rassemble,
 'Faut s'y marier ensemble ;
 C'est l'amour qui nous rassemble,
 'Faut s'y marier ensemble ;
 Puisque c'est ici
 Que l'amour nous rassemble,
 'Faut s'y marier
 Avec l'argent du roi
 Qu'on nous avons gagné !

*The lass has been seven years
 On that ship
 Without being recognized.
 The lass has been seven years
 As a sailor
 Under the watchful eye of her lover,
 Without being recognized,
 Up until the end of the journey!
 Since it's here
 That love gathers us,
 We must be wed;
 It's love that gathers us,
 We must be wed;
 Since it's here
 That love gathers us,
 We must be wed
 With the king's gold
 That we've earned!*

Three Songs of Love and Loneliness

Nancy Telfer (Brampton, ON, b. 1950)

In the Rain – Text: Charles Shaw

Soloists: Toinette Martin, Spencer Gough, Jessica Sharp & William Austin

She came in the green rain scattering roses
 All for the price of a smile
 But no one at the time
 had smiles for anything but gold.

Sing me a rain song.
 She begged the old crone who sold papers on the corner
 But the papers said fair and warmer
 And the weather again was wrong.

She came in the darkness,
 Hugging a dream, that turned into a rainbow,
 and the trees stopped whispering scandal,
 Ah, and blew kisses to the stars.

Again with Music – Text: Kay Smith

Now that the rain is spent,
Trees and the purple-headed timothy and the tall grasses
Are all netted over with seed pearls.
Far as the eye can reach the sea is pale as a pearl,
The air a pool of stillness,
And so still the wild roses their petals make porcelain faces.
From leaf to leaf a raindrop slips,
Stillness upon stillness.
And sprawling over the living grass and the roses,
A dead apple tree with beauty in its bare bones,
Never to put forth again a pink and white cloud of witnesses,
Suddenly blossoms with yellow birds in its grey limbs,
And is almost alive again with music.
Love, O Love, let the birds happen to me.
Let the wild, sweet voices remember me.

Grey-Beast – Text: Lenore Kandel

There is a loneliness upon my heart with grey wings
Lidless eyed and staring
It has no mouth to speak, my loneliness
No ears to hear but crouches silent
Nibbling the edges of my life.
There is a loneliness.

lonely cloud

India Gailey (Halifax, NS, b. 1992)

Commissioned by the Halifax Camerata Singers

“lonely cloud is inspired by the sweet mirror of the sky. Each voice is a drop of vapour in the cloud of one mind or of many. It may be content or sorrowful, but even when it obscures the sun, it is still beautiful.” (*Gailey, from a correspondence with Joel*)

I Go Among the Trees

Jeff Enns (Elmira, ON, b. 1972), Text: Wendell Berry

Lisa Webb, *soloist*

I go among the trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places
where I left them, asleep like cattle.
Then what is afraid of me comes
and lives a while in my sight.
What it fears in me leaves me,
and the fear of me leaves it.
It sings, and I hear its song.

Then what I am afraid of comes.
I live for a while in its sight.
What I fear in it leaves it,
and the fear of it leaves me.
It sings, and I hear its song.
After days of labor,
mute in my consternations,
I hear my song at last,
and I sing it. As we sing,
the day turns, the trees move.

Butterfly Blue

Cy Giacomini (Montreal, QC, b. 1987), Text: Rachel Giacomini

Amelia McMahon, *conductor*

A flash of blue in a garden of green,
And yellow and pink,
A striking hue, so bright.
A flutter, a flap,
A flight.
From petal to pistil, a curious path,
Floating on the front of
a breeze, away.
Once bright,
Now hidden, he moves afar,
No longer in my sight.

But then, oh great delight,
The blue again!
A distant speck, a fleck,
Now nearly out of view,
Yet still in sight.
I watch him fly,
Until he leaves behind the green,
The yellow and pink,
To find another place to light.

You Wave

Evan Hammell (Toronto, ON, b. 1993), Text: Emily Sanford

Amelia McMahon, *conductor*

Morgandy Levy, *soloist*

Come slowly to sit with me
on the shore
look out at the horizon
the dazzling motion of waves—

light dapples watercrests
in shimmerings that trick the eye.
You wave,

pause, bend
for beach glass, saltwater
tumbled, bit of frost.

It seems like the summer
you were here,
gleaming.

Waves, one by one, slow,
tumultuous and cumulative.
Tidal flow—

rising water, I know—
you wave.
I always know you're here
and feel you go.

Secret Heart

Ron Sexsmith (St. Catharines, ON, b. 1964)

as covered by Feist (Calgary, AB, b. 1976)

arr. Ben Duinker (Montreal, QC, b. 1983)

Maiti McGrath, *soloist*; Ellen Gibling, *harp*; Kurt Sampson, *vocal percussion*

Arrangement commissioned by the Halifax Camerata Singers

Secret heart
What are you made of?
What are you so afraid of?
Could it be three simple words
Or the fear of being overheard?
What's wrong?
Let him in on your secret heart
Secret heart
Why so mysterious?

Why so sacred, why so serious?
Maybe you're just acting tough
Maybe you're just not man enough
What's wrong?
Let him in on your secret heart.
This very secret you're trying
to conceal
Is the very same one you're dying
to reveal

Go tell her how you feel.
Secret heart
Come out and share it
This loneliness, few can bear it
Could it have something to do with
Admitting that you just can't go through it alone?
Let her in on your secret
What's wrong?
Let him in on your secret heart.

Whispers of Mermaids

Music by Douglas Vipond (Fredericton, NB, b. 1949)

Texts taken from *Whispers of Mermaids and Wonderful Things:
Children's Poetry and Verse from Atlantic Canada*
(Nimbus, ed. Sheree Fitch and Anne Hunt)

Choral setting premiered by the Halifax Camerata Singers

Prologue – Text: Zach Hapeman, additional words by Douglas Vipond

Think of what you want to say and say it.
Pick up what you want to play and play it.
Discover what you need to sing and sing it.

The Bottom – Text: Reshard Gool

Ann Livia Pluribelle
Fell one morning down a well
Fell and fell and fell and fell
Couldn't tell how far she fell
Till she sit the bottom.

Ann Livia what's-her-name
Thinks it is a bleeding shame
There is no one she can blame
Feels that all in life is rotten
Now that she has lost her bottom.

Ann Livia Pluribelle
Lay in bed for quite a spell
Bum in plaster like a shell
Won't be up until she's well
Cos she hit the bottom.

Sky Carver – Text: Ellen Bryan Obed
Soloists: Molly Anderson & Vincent Kong

Gently the sun with steady eye
Whittled at winter from the sky.
Deeply she cut with sharpened ray
As pieces of winter fell away.
Warmly she held it up when done,
“This is my carving called Spring,” said the Sun.

Little Millipede – Text: Gretchen Kelbaugh

I see a little millipede a silly pede this millipede
I see a little millipede who floats across the sand.

She has a million skinny feet such mini feet these skinny feet
She has a million skinny feet small waves across my hand.

She gets so scared she curls up tight she twirls up tight then curls up tight
She gets so scared she curls up tight I place her on the sand.

The Beagle and the Beluga and the Eagle’s Fine Times

Text: Sheree Fitch

Soloists: Kurt Sampson & Meaghan McKay

I know a beagle who loved bagels
In fact he loved to beg for bagels
In fact he wagged his tail for bagels
whenever bugles blew.

One day the beagle met a beluga
who played the boogie woogie bugle
The beagle giggled, “Hi Beluga!”
then played a jig with his kazoo.

Then the beagle and the beluga,
eating bagels, blowing bugles,
met an eagle who was eager
to eat some buttered bagels too.

So the beagle and the eagle and the bugle-playing beluga
sailed together and saw the seven million wonders of the world.
It was a boondoggling mind-boggling horn-swoggling time.
They played the Boogie-Woogie Beluga-Eager Eagle-Beagle Blues.

Uncle Tom – Text: Al Pittman

Uncle Tom was an old tom cod.
He travelled far and wide.
He went down on the Labrador
to find himself a bride.
He swam as far as Hopedale.
He swam right down to Nain.
And then he turned himself around
and swam back home again.
Uncle Tom Cod!

Young Clem Clam – Text: Al Pittman

Young Clem Clam thought as he swam
as clumsy as ever he could.
How he did wish he was shaped like a fish
and could swim wherever he would.

Unfinished – Text: Zach Hapeman

Think of what you want to say and say it.
Pick up what you want to play and play it.
Imagine how you want to live and live it.
Find out what you have to give and give it.
Consider what you want to see and see it.
Dream of what you want to be and...

Love – Benjamin Sigerson (Vancouver, BC, b. 2001)

Text: Anna Quon, Halifax Poet Laureate

Commissioned by the Halifax Camerata Singers

“Love is many things, both infinitely nuanced and perfectly simple. What it isn’t is dull. Anna Quon’s text captures that personally eternal moment of love on the precipice, just before a person falls fast into it. This piece represents the single breath before and then the letting go.” (*Sigerson, from a correspondence with Joel*)

And what is it?

What is this?

The glow of a cigarette

falling to ash

in the dark?

No

no

no.

It’s a fire fly before

a thunderstorm

the cat’s eyes

before a fight

it’s the lit fuse

on a stick of dynamite

a solar flare, uncurling its baby

fist in the dark

It’s what we’re mesmerized by

before some sweet disaster,

and the horror and the sweetness

of what comes after.

Production Team

Producer: Jeff Reilly

Recording Engineer: Rod Sneddon

Assistant Producer: Bertrum MacDonald

Mastering: John D. S. Adams, Stonehouse Sound

Liner notes: Joel Tranquilla & Kate Spencer

Graphic design & layout: Andrea Rankin Sibley

Artwork: "Sky, Sea, Sand 4" by Andrea Pottyondy

Camerata Staff

Artistic Director: Joel Tranquilla

Collaborative Pianist: Lynette Wahlstrom

Associate Conductor: Amelia McMahon

General Manager: Martha Healy

Choir Manager & Librarian: Kelly Hart

Marketing & Communications: Kate Spencer

Founder & Artistic Director Emeritus: Jeff Joudrey

This album was recorded in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We also acknowledge that people of African descent have been in Mi'kma'ki for over 400 years. We are grateful to be making music and building community on this land, and we honour all who have come before us to Nova Scotia.